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ABSTRACT

A dropout survey was conducted in 1974 at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Education Center, Kankakee, Illinois, to determine why only 38% of its one thousand adult basic education students completed their studies and earned a GED diploma. A variety of formats was used to contact some of those who had been students between 1968 and 1974, including: door-to-door survey, with 121 responses; correspondence survey, with 57 letters in response; taped interviews, involving 4 students; telephone survey, 150 calls to former students. Results of the surveys are presented in table form and in the words of the participants themselves, indicating multiple variables for the interruption of studies, including health, living conditions, employment, transportation, and family problems. Responses indicated a very positive attitude on the part of the students toward the center, even when external factors made it necessary for them to drop out of class. Thirty-three percent of the center graduates are presently enrolled in a college program. (LH)

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SURVEY OF ABE DROPOUTS AT THE

Dr. Martin L. King, Jr., Education Center

A SPECIAL PROJECT PROPOSAL

SUBMITTED BY

KANKAKEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

FOR

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION

Sister Rosemary Meyer, SSCM
Dr. M. L. King, Jr., Educ. Center
Kankakee Community College
Kankakee, Illinois

November 30, 1974

CE 006 371

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

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Introduction

A thousand adults desiring a GED diploma have rung the front door bell of the King Center. In the six years of its existence, sixty-two per cent of them have not stayed long enough to earn that certificate. Why?

The students had the answers. A survey begun in June, 1974, was completed by November, 1974. It encompassed door-to-door interviews, telephone calls, tape recordings, correspondence. The results of the survey are herewith recorded in charts, quotes, statistics, essays.

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Education Center is located in Kankakee, Ill. Kankakee is sixty miles south of Chicago, one-hundred fifty miles north of Springfield. It has a population of 32,000. The north section of Kankakee houses 1200 black families in the low-income bracket. The target population of the Center is 12,000 adults in need of an education; 4,000 adults without an elementary diploma; 8,000 without a high school education (U.S. Census, 1970). Kankakee has the second highest percentage of Public Aid recipients in the State of Illinois (Kankakee Public Aid Office). The Center is in the midst of the psychological and physical scars of desegregation, oppression and poverty.

The people of Kankakee renovated a simple, three-story house to serve as a school in the heart of the black community. The Center continues to be maintained by churches, industries, the young and the old. It has its own Board of Directors. It is sponsored by the Kankakee Community College, its liason with OSPI, Springfield, Illinois.

The primary purpose of the Center is to foster human dignity through education. The location of the school, open enrollment, the appointments of the Center honor this objective. A program of study in its home-like, adult atmosphere assists in this. Tutoring, self-programming, small grouping, and the dynamics of ethnic exchange are the theatre wherein an adult may begin or complete his elementary and/or GED studies.

Thirty-eight percent of the thousand students who rang the door bell are presently enrolled at the Center, or have received their GED diploma. Thirty-three percent of the graduates are presently enrolled in a college program.

Sixty-two percent of the enrollees came for a time, shared a portion of their lives with us, their dreams of advancement. This study is dedicated to them.

I. DOOR-to-DOOR SURVEY

A door-to-door survey was conducted during the month of August, 1974, by four male teachers of the Dr. King Center. Two of the teachers are black, two are white. Each was given a list of one hundred students names, addresses and phone numbers. The target area of the Center was divided into four geographical segments. Each teacher was to contact twenty-five students. Repeated calls were made to contact former students who had staggered working hours, or were on vacation.

This chapter includes:

a. Letters from the four teachers.

b. The Interview Format.

c. Responses from one hundred thirty-three students.

d. A profile of their present enrollment, of graduates, and an enrollment count.

Dr. M. L. King, Jr. Education Center
720 N. GREENWOOD AVE.
KANKAKEE, ILL. 60901
932-5426

October 22, 1974

To Whom It May Concern:

The interviews which I conducted in August as part of this survey were both informative and constructive. They were informative because the people responded with a surprising candor to the questions. While most had only positive comments for the Center and its staff, those who were critical expressed their feelings in an open and sincere manner about the program's deficiencies, and not in the direction of any particular staff member. Their constructive comments led to some reorganization at the Center, such as "contracting attendance" with students who can only come on a part-time basis.

The most frequent explanation for discontinuing attendance was outside interference rather than dissatisfaction with the program. The areas of family and personal illness, transportation, and work seemed to be the greatest interference with studies.

The interviews were also of personal benefit in that it increased my knowledge of the impact that the Center has upon the community, and enhanced my awareness of the problems facing adults wishing to obtain an eighth grade certificate and/or a GED diploma.

Sincerely yours,

Peter Quigley

Dr. M. L. King, Jr. Education Center
720 N. GREENWOOD AVE.
KANKAKEE, ILL. 60901
932-5426

August, 1974

To Whom It May Concern,

The following is a survey conducted from a sampling of one-hundred students of the Dr. King Center:

1. They felt the contact on a one-to-one basis for the survey was appropriate.

2. The consensus of most interviewed students is that the teachers are concerned about them as individuals.

3. Open enrollment, rather than a mandatory starting and stopping time, was an important factor for them.

The survey, our portion of it, shows that 90% of the students who obtained their GED diplomas at the Center are continuing their education.

Survey submitted by:

Orell G. Holeman

Orell G. Holeman

William E. Steward, Sr.

William E. Steward, Sr.

Dr. M. L. King, Jr. Education Center
720 N. GREENWOOD AVE.
KANKAKEE, ILL. 60901
932-5426

October 18, 1974

To Whom It May Concern,

I had three strong impressions in my visiting and telephoning people concerning our Drop-Out Study:

1. Everyone was happily surprised at the visit. People talked and talked, and were really happy that someone from the Dr. King Center was following up.

2. All those who had not already graduated indicated to me that they did want to come back and finish, someday. Many promised to come back. This could have been politeness on their part, but the sincerity of their desire to achieve was obvious.

3. There is a tremendous <u>unmet</u> need in the community for adult education. In spite of our impressive figures of students and graduates, we've only tapped the surface.

Sincerely yours,

Fr Raymond Lescher*

* The Reverend Raymond Lescher saw the need for the Dr. King Center, and established it Nov. 18, 1968.

Summer of '74

INTERVIEW FORMAT

Interviewer:

1. Self-introduction
2. Statement of the purpose of the call
3. Request for assistance in the GED Drop-Out Study.

Interviewed:

1. Student's Name_____
2. Student's Address_____
3. Are you presently enrolled at the King Center?

   _____Yes _____NO
4. Are you a GED graduate of the Center?

   _____Yes _____No
5. How many times have you enrolled at the Center? _____
6. What are some of the problems you had in CONTINUING your studies at the Center?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. What are some of the things you would like to see done at the King Center? _____

_____

Homes Contacted: 153

14 of these students are enrolled in '74
93 of these students are not enrolled
46 of these students have moved

Problems		Responses
1.	Family illness	8
2.	Personal illness	12
3.	Death in the family	2
4.	New job	9
5.	Baby sitting	14
6.	Change in job shift	11
7.	No transportation	11
8.	Moved away	28
9.	Money	3
10.	Lessons too hard	2
11.	Problem with the school	5
12.	"Blues"	14
13.	Court-Police appointment	1
14.	Neighborhood	1
	Total Response:	121

Door-to-Door Interviews

+ = Yes
- = No

August 1974

Student Number	Presently Enrolled	Graduate	Enrolled (times)
1	-	-	1
2	-	-	2
3	-	+	1
4	-	-	1
5	+	-	3
6	-	-	1
7	+	-	2
8	-	-	1
9	-	-	3
10	-	-	2
11	+	-	3
12	-	+	4
13	-	-	1
14	-	+	4
15	-	-	1
16	-	-	2
17	-	-	1
18	-	-	4
19	+	-	3
20	-	+	1
21	-	+	1

Door-to-Door Interviews

+ = Yes
- = No

August 1974

Student Number	Presently Enrolled	Graduate	Enrolled (times)
22	+	-	3
23	+	-	2
24	-	+	2
25	+	-	7
26	-	-	1
27	-	-	3
28	-	+	4
29	-	-	1
30	-	-	1
31	-	+	3
32	+	-	7
33	-	+	2
34	-	-	1
35	-	-	1
36	-	-	2
37	-	-	1
38	-	+	2
39	-	-	2
40	-	-	1
41	-	-	1
42	-	+	3

Door-to-Door Interviews

August 1974

+ = Yes
- = No

Student Number	Presently Enrolled	Graduate	Enrolled (times)
43	-	-	2
44	+	-	4
45	-	-	2
46	-	+	1
47	+	-	5
48	+	-	1
49	-	-	2
50	-	-	2
51	-	-	1
52	-	+	4
53	-	+	1
54	-	-	1
55	-	-	1
56	-	-	1
57	-	-	2
58	-	-	1
59	-	-	4
60	-	-	3
61	-	-	3
62	-	-	2
63	-	-	1

Door-to-Door Interviews

+ - Yes
- - No

August 1974

Student Number	Presently Enrolled	Graduate	Enrolled (times)
64	-	-	1
65	+	-	3
66	-	-	5
67	-	-	1
68	-	-	4
69	-	-	1
70	-	-	7
71	-	-	1
72	-	-	1
73	-	-	1
74	+	-	7
75	-	-	1
76	+	-	1
77	-	-	1
78	-	-	1
79	-	-	2
80	-	-	4
81	-	-	1
82	-	-	2
83	-	-	2
84	-	-	2
85	-	-	2

Door-to-Door Interviews
August 1974

Student Number	Presently Enrolled	Graduate	Enrolled (times)

86 through 131

had moved and left no forwarding address. Some of these homes were visited from two to four times before a contact was made with someone in the home of the former student.

No record was kept of the number of phone calls made by the four male teachers who conducted the door-to-door interviews.

II. CORRESPONDENCE SURVEY

Seven hundred nine letters, forms, stamped return-addressed envelopes were sent to the students. Despite a minute combing of changes in address, one hundred eighty-seven letters were returned with, "No Forwarding Address".

Four hundred fifty-five letters were not acknowledged.

Fifty-seven letters were answered and returned to the King Center. The written comments of the students focus on reasons for non-attendance. They are recorded as "Student Feed-Back".

The report covers:

a. The letter mailed to the student.

b. The form sheet for requested responses, and the tabulation of those responses.

c. Remarks of the students, termed "Student Feed-Back".

Dr. M. L. King, Jr. Education Center
720 N. GREENWOOD AVE.
KANKAKEE, ILL. 60901
932-5426

Summer of '74

Dear Students:

The Dr. King Center is now six years old. You made it real by your presence with us.

We need your help in a study requested by people who want to know, "What problems cause people to stop attending school in their desire for a GED certificate?"

Each year many of our graduates had to start three or four times before they got their diploma.

Would you write on the back of form and tell us why you, or your friends, have not been able to finish your work at the Center?....OR.... Check the form and send it to us, please?

This study will, hopefully, convince educational leaders to have patience and understanding with adults who, like you, have a strong desire to get an education in spite of many hardships.

Stop in for a cup of coffee and a visit!

Thank you,

The Dr. King Center Staff

Dr. M. L. King, Jr. Education Center

720 N. GREENWOOD AVE.
KANKAKEE, ILL. 60901
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Please check the reasons which prevented you from continuing your studies at the Center . . . OR . . . Tell us in your own words, what it's all about.

	1968-69	1969-70	1970-71	1971-72	1972-73	1973-74	
Family illness	IIII	I	II	IIII	|||	||| III	24
Personal illness	|||	I	I	IIII	IIII	||| I	22
Death in family					I	I	2
New job	I	II	I	I	III	II	10
Baby sitting	IIII		III	III	||| II		17
Change in work shift . . .	I	III	IIII	|||	|||	IIII	22
Transportation	III	II	II	III	IIII	||| III	23
Moved away	I	I	II	I	III	IIII	12
Money	|||	II	II	II	III	III	18
Lessons too hard	I			I	I	II	5
Problem with the school .	II	I	I	I	I	II	8
"Blues"	I	I	II	IIII	III	II	13
Court-Police appointments.	I	I		I	I	I	5

Other . . . . . This is the tabulation of responses on the FORM sent to the students. Fifty-seven students filled and returned the FORMS. One hundred eighty-seven letters and FORMS were returned to the Center with: "No Forwarding Address".

How many times have you registered at the Center? _____

Are you now a student at the center? _____

Have you passed all GED exams? _____

Have you continued studying at a college? _____

KANKAKEE COMMUNITY COLLEGE --- COOPERATING AGENCY.

Dr. M. L. King, Jr. Education Center
720 N. GREENWOOD AVE.
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Student Feed-back

Student Number	Response to the questionnaire
3	I got sick the last of the summer, just before school was out. I did not take the tests. I do not have a baby sitter for this fall, but as soon as I can, I hope to be back. I've enrolled three or four times.
4	Have never quit or delayed my studies, although transportation and money are a problem. (Rehabilitation Drug Center) (Registration: once)
5	Working midnights, I usually am so tired and sleepy I can't make it to class. Sometimes, I do get the "Blues". (Registration: once)
7	I was afraid to be around very many people at one time. I had a constant battle with myself about being ambitious, and making a good future for myself. I have enrolled three times. I have decided to really try.
9	It is good. I am learning. I think everyone should go. (Registered seven times)
10	My mother got into a car accident. She wants to pay the person with whom I ride. She can't because she has to pay for our car and for hospital bills, and I don't have a job as yet. (Registered once)
11	Church on Wednesday nights; supervising Boy Scouts; too tired. The lessons were too hard in '71, '72, '73. This has been corrected. (Registered four times)
13	I had to get back on my feet. I have things straight.
15	I have been attending regularly from registration. (ESL..2 years)

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Student Feed-back

Student Number	Response to the questionnaire
16	Sometimes you just can't seem to rub two coins together. You just ain't got it together. Being with you in school made everything go so well. With all your support, including your fantastic personnel, how could I lose: Thanks for everything. (Registered twice)
17	I have a two year old child with a lung disorder. Because of this illness I had to go to work to pay doctor bills, etc. I haven't had time to concentrate on my GED. I have registered three times.
19	If it wasn't for the King Center and the wonderful staff, I would never have received my GED. I feel that there should be more schools of this type. (Registered once. Rehabilitation Drug Center)
20	I took Reading during the summer months. I am back in the regular school now.
25	My two little children are very sick all the time, and I have to be home with them. We are going to move away. I have been sick, and my husband has been very sick, also.
26	I was very pleased with the help and moral support I received at the Center. (Registered once)
27	I am trying very hard to catch on to the school work. That is one of the reasons I have come back to school. I feel I am using my time. Before, I just didn't have my mind on school. That's not good.
28	My car was wrecked. I have to get the damages on my car taken care of. I shall return soon.

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Student Feed-back

Student Number	Response to the Questionnaire
33	I would like to go, but for some reason I can't get myself together. Maybe when I retire and can come back, I'll finish what I want to do. (Registered twice) Yours as ever.
34	It's hard to get a dependable babysitter while I go to evening typing classes. I have been trying real hard to find someone. I really enjoyed working at the King Center. I hope I can return real soon. (Registered three times in three years).
35	I had a child that got very bad upsets. Everything is better now. I would like to start back, but not in the middle of a subject. I want to start at the beginning. (Registered once)
39	(Answered by one other than the addressee.) "The person this letter was addressed to moved from the area in 1971. He has been in a penal institution since 1972."
40	I have my GED. Thank God. I would have gone into the sewing class, but I started to work. (Registered five times.)
41	I go to school full time at KCC. (GED Graduate)
44	I received my GED two years ago from the King Center. Thanks to the King Center staff I am now at KCC. (Registered three times)
45	We farm. Our work load was heavy last year, and there wasn't much time for study. I now have a baby, and my time is taken up with her. I've one more subject to finish. I hope to be able to go on with my schooling. It does have to fit in with being a wife and a mother, though. The King Center has been very helpful to me.
49	I love the school. The people are nice. I just love them. (ABE) Registered seven times .....each year for seven years.
50	It's nice. I like it. I learned lots. (ABE, Registered seven times.)

III. TAPED INTERVIEWS

The interviews were conducted by Sister Rosemary, who has been at the Center since its beginning. Five students were asked to participate in the study. One of the students asked not to be taped. One did not adhere to the purpose of the interview. His tape will be used in a future study.

The conversations did not occur in paragraphs, as they appear in the report. Sentences were compiled to form a more readable message. The integrity of the student's thought, his particular phrasing, were preserved.

The student has a pseudo name. He represents many students.

III. TAPED INTERVIEW

Student: Caucasion
Girl, 22 yrs. old
Registration: Three times

I'm really excited about making this tape, Sister! I'm honored you asked me to do it. My boy friend is excited, too."

"The tape, Melanie, is to further our work at the Center. Why do some students go away? Why do they return? You've registered three times in two years. What gives with you?"

"It's my attitude, Sister. My attitude was bad. I made judgments against everybody, even women I didn't know as I passed them on the street! Then I'd feel guilty. I couldn't stop, so I'd feel sorry for myself. I'd get all confused about what was wrong, and what was right. I couldn't feel good about myself. I kept having battles in my mind."

"Were the negative feeling with you when you were at the Center?"

"No, I always liked it here. I liked the people. I especially liked Cee-Cee (Cee-Cee is a young, black, married woman who is a math. teacher. She has taught at the Center for four years).

"What's so special about Cee-Cee?"

"She was always so willing to help. Even when I was dumb-dumb, she showed me how to read problems. She tried so hard I'd say, 'Now, Melanie, you've just got to try a little.'"

"You were away so long this time. What made you come back, Melanie?"

"It's attitude again, Sister. Your staff has a fantastic attitude! They're good people. They don't pretend to care. They do care! Maybe it's love?? Yes! Love makes this place unique. Everybody's somebody. There's no pressure. No inferiority. I don't mind being around a lot of people."

"You feel good about yourself?"

"Yes! I walk to school and I laugh in the sun. Sometimes I cry, but it isn't sad crying. You know what I mean?"

****

Interview (Not recorded upon request)

Subject: Black, male
53 yrs. of age
1968, registered as an illiterate
Laborer
Student Representative on the Board of Directors for the Center

"Well, now, I knew you'd ask for me. I said to my wife, 'The little woman knows. She knows. She'll ask me'. Well, now. Let's take it step by step, like we always does."

"First, people come here to continue where they left off as a child. What was begun was interrupted."

"What interrupted them, Henry? Why didn't they stay in school?"

"Well, now, I can't answer for all those peoples! Jus' for me....It's problems. Problems. Everybody's got problems. Different problems."

"Like.....?"

"Well, now, it's always different, you know. Sickness, new babies, no job, change of shifts, no car. We didn't usta have a chance. Now when I stop it's because of a accident, or a change of hours. But I always come back. I'm willing to keep going until I finish. That's will power. That's will power."

"Why did you come, Henry? You and I started on a borrowed table in the kitchen. We borrowed everything we had! Remember?"

"Even the chairs! Even the chairs! It was nice."

"You can't be talking about the furniture!"

"I liked the peoples. I wanted to learn how to write a letter, to spell. You see, it's like this: When I wanted to buy something, I had to ask peoples to read the numbers, the tags. Like, 'How much for the shoes'? 'How much for parts?'"

"Now I don't have to ask. I look. I know. I don't hafta bother no one... anyone!"

"Henry, how can we help the people?"

"I jus don't know of anything more. When you give a man an education, you give him everything."

Taped Interview

Subject:	Male, black	1st year:	Three attempts
	GED graduate	2nd year:	One attempt
	26 yrs. of age	3rd year:	Three attempts
		4th year:	Made it!

"Could I ask you to tell it like it is, John? What interrupted your studies? Why did you keep coming back for more?"

"The first year it was marital problems. I just couldn't hack everything."

"The second year, after recruitment notes, I returned. I stayed until I got a job. I was sure I had it made, and I quit."

"The third year I tried studying at home, with some tutoring at the Center. The faculty was the motivating force. They coaxed, they pushed. In a way, you could say they babied me. This was necessary at that time. I had to have someone behind me. Sana, that teacher from India, helped a lot with my reading. The staff would say, 'You can't do it until you decide to do it, man.' They could be hard on a guy, too! "

"Then I had an accident with the car. I phoned the Center for books. You came to the hospital, and I started my song and dance about the GED diploma. You interrupted with, 'Listen, Brother, I've heard that one. Don't tell me. Do it!'"

"I got the message. A runner has to prepare himself to run. He gets ready. I started studying at a certain time. I developed a basic pattern of studying. I was trying to be a vegetarian, too. That taught me self-discipline. It slowed me down, too. I could think better. I learned that material things could hamper me. I began to pray, to relate to a Supreme Being."

"Sister, we ought to spend more time at the Center discussing things like faith, frustration, God, discipline."

"You can't take those exams unless you're ready inside, Sister."

Subject: Female, black
Age: 51 yrs. of age
Partially sighted
Three registrations

"Helen, we're doing a study of the students. What it really means is, 'Why do students come, leave, return?' Can you share your impressions of this?"

"I came because I wanted to learn. I wanted to learn more. Each time I came to the Center I learned something. When I stopped, it was for a good reason."

NOTE: Helen is partially sighted. She discontinued her studies, twice, under the doctor's orders, that sight might be preserved in her second eye.

"This is your third registration, isn't it? Four years ago you started to study with us, and were interrupted."

"That's right. I come, each time, because I want a better education. Maybe, maybe...maybe, I can be something I can be....thankful for."

"How many children do you have, Helen?"

"Four, Sister. My youngest is a lab. technician. My oldest son is in England, with the Air Force. He's studying to be an engineer. My oldest daughter is married, and has four children. She will receive her college degree this year, in Chicago. My second oldest child, a son, is studying to be an architect at Normal, Illinois."

"Were you motivated to study because of them, Helen?"

"No, not really. I want to do it for myself."

"Could I say you want it for your own self value, self-worth?"

"Yes. I wanted it for my own advancement. Now that the children are raised, I can do that."

"What do you think of Open Enrollment, Helen? Does it help the students?"

"Well, if a person stops for no good reason, maybe he ought to sign a paper, or something....to say he means it this time. Otherwise, I think it interrupts everybody. Maybe a promise could help him. I always feel that things are going to end, and I want to get ahead of that!"

"How can we help, Helen? We need books and examinations with larger print for you and for Larry. We're searching, believe me!"

"Day classes are better. The light is good. Short study periods, too."

IV. TELEPHONE SURVEY

Originally, the plan was to make one hundred fifty phone calls to former students. Classes began in September ('74), and calls from students were so on target with the Survey, it was decided to incorporate the student's call.

A decided change between day students and night students was noted. Evening students indicated it was difficult to get a sitter to come to their homes. They had to take the children to the home of a sitter. This was hazardous for small children during the winter months. There was also the added burden of bundling and unbundling children after a day's work, the preparation of supper, receptivity to the family's account of the day, and personal preparation for night classes at the Center.

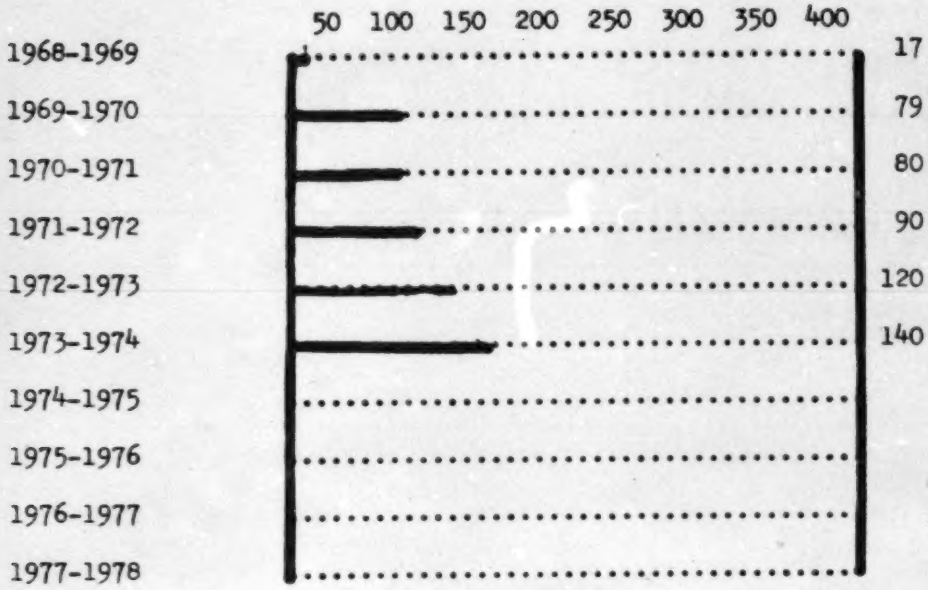
IV. TELEPHONE SURVEY

150 Calls

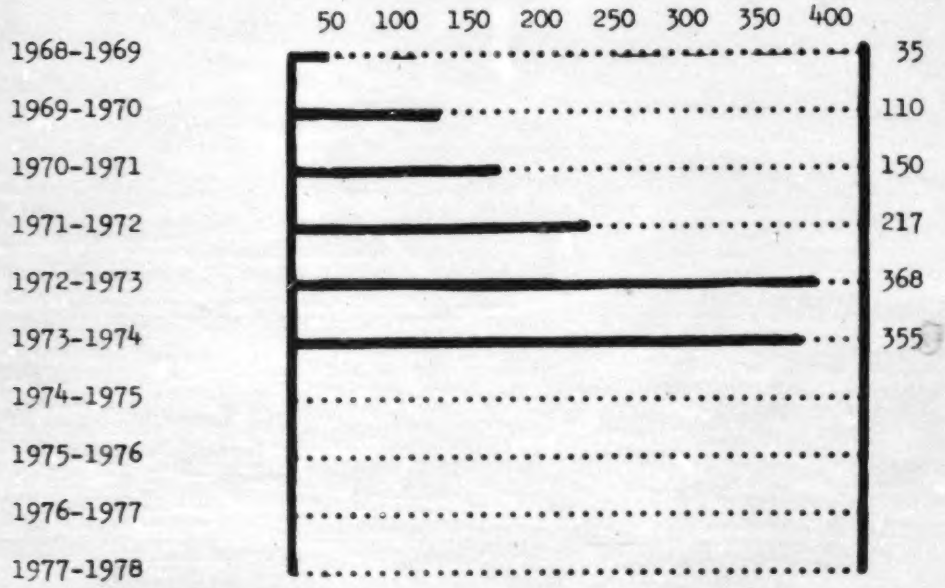
Family Illness	20
Personal Illness	35
Death in Family	0
New Job	15
Baby Sitting Problem	56
Change in work shift	26
Transportation	35
Moved away**	--
Money	10
Lessons too hard	3
Problem with the school	2
"Blues"	20
Court-Police Appointments	10

** Impossible to determine this factor.

September Registrations



June Enrollment



V. CONCLUSION

Eighty percent of the one thousand students who came to the Dr. King Center did not complete their studies with a GED diploma. Statistically, this could be labeled a failure.

We believe to the contrary. We have been a success. A tremendous success. In this instance, statistics are deceptive and empty.

Our Drop-Out Survey shows that multiple variables interrupt the adult as he studies. Illness, crowded living quarters, employment shifts, non-transportation, family responsibilities temporarily affect his school attendance, Once he gets some breathing room, he returns time and time again to follow through in his studies.

Poor people, and the so-called rejects of our society, have problems in surviving. Their life is one of constant change as outside forces continuously affect them. Their patterns are irregular because much of their life is irregular. They need time and patience. Patience and time. The books must be open for them. The door of our Center, and other centers must be open to them.

In conclusion, we suggest the word "Drop-Out" be abolished when dealing with adults. The word is loaded with negative and prejudicial concepts. We are unfair and judgemental before we even begin to listen, to learn, to teach.

VI. POSTSCRIPT

The Dr. M. L. King, Jr., Education Center has been selected for presentation at the Multi-National Workshop, Washington, D.C., January, 1975. The program will be one of seven in the United States to be presented as part of the Workshop. The Conference is co-sponsored by World Education and the Adult Education Association of the U.S.A. Seven programs from abroad and seven from the U.S.A. designed for adults with less than a high school education are being selected for the workshop.

November 4, 1974.